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ATFP Asks US to Ensure No Israeli Building in E1

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Press Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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[2] December 3, 2012 - 12:00am

Dec. 3, Washington, DC -- The American Task Force on Palestine (ATFP) today urged the Obama administration to use all its good offices with Israel to ensure that settlement expansion reportedly being considered in the highly sensitive "E1 corridor" not take place. Israeli officials reportedly authorized at least 3,000 new settlement housing units in and around the East Jerusalem area, including in E1, in retaliation for the Palestinian mission status upgrade at the United Nations last week. If completed, the plan settlement expansion would bisect the territory, cutting occupied East Jerusalem off almost entirely from the rest of the West Bank. It would therefore cast serious doubt on the viability of a two-state solution.

In the days leading up to the UN vote, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton specifically warned Israel not to respond by building in E1. *The New York Times* reported that Israel's announcement therefore came as a "rude shock" to the US government. Numerous European governments and the United States have expressed alarm at the proposed accelerated building project in the highly sensitive area. United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon said completion of the E1 project could be a "fatal blow" to the prospects for a two state solution.

ATFP President Ziad J. Asali said, "Building in the E1 area would be a devastating blow to prospects for a two-state solution that allows Israel to live side-by-side in peace, security and dignity with a Palestinian state. It would practically cut the West Bank in half, and would sever East Jerusalem from the rest of the West Bank. This could make a viable peace agreement impossible to realize. It is therefore strongly in the American national interest that our government uses all of its best offices with Israel to ensure that no settlement expansion in E1 or elsewhere takes place. Since Israel initially approved the E1 project in 1999, these plans have been opposed by all American administrations, of both parties."

Dr. Asali concluded, "In order to preserve both the practical viability and the political credibility of a two-state solution, it is imperative that Israel not go forward with this proposed settlement expansion. At a time when the Palestinians and Israel are drifting further apart, it is more urgent than ever for the United States to reverse this trend and revive a credible political process. Only the United States can play the leadership role in bringing the parties back together and starting to restore trust and cooperation."

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